

## What is a miracle?

The intercessory power of the person being studied is usually established through the proof of a miracle. The subject of a miracle is usually an organic illness so that there can be scientific proof. Psychological and other conditions are too difficult to prove in a scientific manner even though there may be many such “miracles”. A second miracle is currently required after beatification as verification that this person is worthy of honour throughout the world.

For a cure to be declared a miracle there are two aspects to be examined – the theological and the medical.

**Theological:** Did it happen in the context of prayer to God through the intercession of the holy person? It is God who does the curing.

**Medical:** Was the cure beyond normal medical and scientific explanation? This proof is by documentary and anecdotal evidence. Six questions need to be answered:

1. Did the person really have the illness? Was it a valid diagnosis?
2. Is there proof that, at another point in time, the illness was gone?
3. Is there proof that the cure was not brought about by medical or surgical means?
4. Is there proof that it was morally instantaneous i.e. outside the normal curative process?
5. Is there proof that the cure was complete?
6. Is the cure permanent? Before a cure can be examined as a possible miracle, five years must have elapsed for an adult and ten years for a child.

When all the documentation has been examined locally, and there appears to be no scientific explanation for the cure, a special tribunal is constituted and the findings sent to Rome.

There, all the pertinent documents are examined by both the theological and medical teams. If the outcome is successful the blessed person can be declared a saint for the universal Church.

It is a slow process. Please pray that the canonisation of Blessed Mary MacKillop will proceed for the greater glory of God and the inspiration of the universal Church.

## Mary MacKillop Centres

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## Beatification and Canonisation



## Blessed Mary MacKillop

*Blessed Mary MacKillop was born of Scottish parents on January 15, 1842 in Brunswick, Victoria. As she grew up she experienced what it was to be poor. She spent time as a governess in Penola where she met Fr Julian Tenison Woods. Together they founded the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart. She and the Sisters of St Joseph cared for the poor especially in rural areas. At her death on August 8, 1909 Mary was revered as a holy woman and was beatified by Pope John Paul II in Sydney on January 19, 1995. She is Australia's first saint.*



## Beatification and Canonisation

*The Church does not make a saint –  
It recognises a saint.*

**W**hat does the Church look at in declaring a saint?

The Church looks at the life of a person:

- what she did,
- how she reacted to the events of life,
- what people wrote and said about her,
- what she wrote or said herself.

This requires a great deal of historical research depending on whether or not she is of recent memory, whether or not the person wrote prolifically and what manner of records are extant.

The Church also looks at the question of continuing devotion. In other words, after the person died, did the people keep the memory alive? Is it still alive in the faith of the people? Is that person's life continuing in the faith of the people?

Canonisation is a double statement – about the life of the person, and about the faith of the people who are alive at this moment: they are as much a part of the canonisation as the life of the person.



## Beatification

Beatification is both a process and a stage on the way to canonisation. The ceremony of beatification is the public declaration that a person:

- has lived an heroically holy life,
- is with God,
- has the power of intercession for us with God,
- is a model for the faithful.

It recognises that the person is a saint for a particular region, for a particular group of people or for a religious congregation. It permits this person to be honoured by special liturgies and prayers but **not** for the whole Church or the world.



## How does a person get beatified?

All baptised persons are called to holiness and many persons are holy. Beatification and canonisation give a **public** recognition that the person is worthy of veneration because the holiness of life has been proved.

The beatification process begins in the diocese where the person died or where a miracle is claimed to have occurred. There are two phases: one in the diocese and one in Rome. In the diocesan phase the writings of the person are examined, stories and testimony concerning the person's reputation for holiness are collected from people who knew the person or had heard of her. There also has to be evidence that there is no public cult at this stage.

When all this is examined in Rome, permission is given to formally introduce the Cause for beatification. The person now has the title "Servant of God". Mary MacKillop received this title on 1/2/1973. Further evidence is more rigorously

collected in the diocese to establish the heroicity of virtue. In addition there is an examination of cures that could be declared miracles and one cure is chosen for study.

All the information is sent to Rome where a panel of cardinals and medical experts examine all the evidence for holiness and for the cure. If the outcome is positive the recommendation is made to the Holy Father who can then confirm the findings. The person is given the title of "Venerable". For Mary MacKillop this occurred on 13/6/1992.

The preparations for the public ceremony of beatification can then be set in motion. The ceremony is usually held in Rome but may, with permission, be celebrated in the place that is significant to the one who is to be declared Blessed.



## How does canonisation happen?

The recognition of a miracle is seen to verify that the person is with God and has intercessory power with Him. The Blessed person does not grant the favour herself but intercedes with God on behalf of those who ask the favour. Canonisation at present requires proof that a second miracle has occurred since beatification. The proof of such a miracle must be rigorously studied and presented to Rome, where the Cause is reopened. When all has been accepted by both the theologians and the medical experts the Holy Father issues the decree and the ceremony can proceed. The title of "Saint" is now granted.

Canonisation means that the saint is recognised world-wide and venerated as a saint for the universal Church. The feast-day is in the universal Church calendar and the liturgy and prayers may be universally used.